

**Testimony for Charter Oak State College –
By James and Tracey Josey
Appropriations Committee – Public Hearing
February 28, 2011**

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Tracey Josey and I reside in New Britain, CT. I am honored to be here today to speak about the importance of Charter Oak State College's CT Wage (Workforce Advancement Grant for Education) Program for adults pursuing their degree.

I would like to first thank the general assembly for supporting the CT WAGE Program and for your support and concern for quality early care programs for children. As an early care provider, I share that concern. I also applaud the Governor for his support of early care centers and understanding the importance for all of us to earn a degree.

I am here this evening with my husband James and my daughter Dae'ja to share with you the positive impact your support and Charter Oak State College has made to my family.

I started my journey at Charter Oak State College with the goal and intent to complete my Bachelor's Degree. I am a teacher associate at the YWCA in New Britain and understand the importance of education in order to provide quality care to the children that I work with as well as to my daughter. When I initially started at Charter Oak State College, I was not a part of the CT WAGE Program - although I knew about it - as I was receiving funding from outside sources such as CT Charters A Course and private funders all of which enabled me to attend college. Unfortunately, after a year my scholarship funding ended. Being an early care provider, our salaries are very low and I did not have the resources to continue my education. So, I applied for the CT WAGE program and fortunately for me, I was accepted. That program has been a lifesaver!

My husband James works at the CT Science Center and has always aspired to be like Matt Fleury, the Executive Director and CEO. James did not know that Matt Fleury is a Charter Oak State College graduate until we attended an event at the Science Center on behalf of the College and Matt spoke about the importance of Charter Oak State College to adults who are trying to complete their degree. From that point on, James was determined to complete his degree and become someone important like Matt. Just this last spring, James too was accepted into the CT WAGE program. He is able to continue his education because of your support.

Now both of us are students at Charter Oak State College in the CT WAGE program. We are not the 18 and 22 year olds who are living on a college campus. Unfortunately we did not complete our education at an earlier age. Had it not been for Charter Oak State College and its understanding of the importance of adult students earning a degree, neither I nor my husband would be here today.

We are what you envisioned this program to be – low income families earning a degree, Pell eligible. We are working in CT, staying in CT and want to give back to our community and our state. With our degrees we know that we can do this.

We are a working family. We want to better ourselves. I want to remain in early childhood because of my love for children, but need help in paying for my education. We have a child and all three of us are proud to be going to school together!

Appropriations Committee

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Testimony by

Grace Widmer-Santana

Honorable Senator Harp and Honorable Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you so much for granting me the opportunity to address you regarding a very important service.

My name is Grace Widmer-Santana, 6 Autumn Ridge Road, Oxford, and I have been a distance learning student at Charter Oak State College since I was laid off in 2009. As a result of my status as a student in Charter Oak, I was not only hired in January 2011, but was able to negotiate a higher starting salary. Through the Charter Oak Distance learning program I am about a year away from receiving my bachelors degree.

The program is aimed at adults who have very busy lives and wish to either get their Associate and/or Bachelors or degrees. The program helped me to navigate the often intimidating as well as confusing pathways from financial aid, counseling and advice on the courses offered as well as determining my goal and setting up a schedule to achieve it in the shortest time possible.

I was assigned a counselor who is available to answer my questions and she has given me very helpful advice on which courses would be best suited for my degree. The Charter Oak program helps students transferring credits from other schools as well as assessing what general educational requirements are missing and advising what courses are first to be taken to meet those requirements. The courses are taught by very professional educators who are available as facilitators to learning.

I am hoping that this honorable committee would do its utmost to maintain and hopefully enhance the independent integrity of Charter State College. I believe it is this particular quality of Charter Oak that makes it extremely successful. Adults like myself, need these kinds of affordable educational opportunities so that we can stay competitive in today's a market that demands persons with degrees.